

A Statement on the Attempt to Free the Hostages
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The Fourth Gospel portrays the Last Supper as the occasion for an extended conversation between Jesus and his disciples in the midst of which he said:

"...This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Ever since Jesus said that - because he said it - that part of humanity called Judeo-Christian has regarded the laying down of life itself to be the highest, most moral, most human act of all...an indicator of the greatest of love...

Last week eight American young men laid down their lives for their friends...

They did not die for abstractions. They did not even die for political goals such as justice, or the revolution, or the defeat of the enemy. They died, very simply, trying to set their countrymen free. They died because they had thought about it, and the freedom of their countrymen was regarded as worth the risk.

I am saying this to you this morning because I think it needs saying: and because what those young men did is getting lost in the frantic attempt to find someone to blame for the failure of the rescue mission and what we regard as further humiliation. That, it seems to me, is tragic, and essentially wrong.

The act of heroism - courage - selflessness - can never indicate humiliation. It is rather - our culture at its best and strongest.

The agony of recent months - all our military power neutralized by a handful of militants - is not humiliation. Our restraint, our refusal to retaliate by killing and bombing uninvolved people is Western Civilization at its strongest and best.

I am embarrassed, not by my country's weakness, but by newspaper editorials which, from the safety of mid-Ohio, presume to criticize the President and advise the Pentagon on the precise tactics necessary...

I am embarrassed by officials now using tragedy to gain political advantage.

Eight young men laid down their their lives. This nation - this fragile idea - will not die, so long as young men do that.

Let us Pray:

God of all nations, we give you thanks for the lives of eight countrymen and particularly for their courage and selflessness...

We pray, our Father, for their parents and wives and children - comfort them with your love and assure them that you know what it means to lose a young son.

We pray, God of all, for our countrymen in continued bondage. Give them renewed strength - and in this hour a determined hope.

We pray, Father, for the people of Iran - for the authorities and the militants -

And we pray for our nation. Bless with your gifts of wisdom and courage - our President and his advisors. Give him strength and health and confidence.

God Almighty, guide this nation in the days ahead. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.